

Cancer  Wellness Center

# 2025 Impact Report



## Beyond The Diagnosis

Transforming Lives Through Whole-Person Care



# BEYOND THE DIAGNOSIS

As we reflect on 2025, we are deeply grateful for the donors who make our mission possible. This year's theme—***Beyond the Diagnosis: Transforming Lives Through Whole-Person Care***—highlights the importance of supportive, holistic care for individuals and families facing cancer. Your generosity ensured that **nearly 2,500 participants** received the care they needed. Every story in this report reflects your impact and the hope you help create.

Because of your support, individuals and families facing cancer accessed whole-person services that strengthen emotional well-being, build resilience, and offer a compassionate community—care that extends far beyond a medical diagnosis and supports people throughout their entire cancer experience.

A major milestone this year was the development of our **2026–2028 Strategic Plan**, shaped through thoughtful input from participants, donors, staff, board members, and community partners. This plan centers on four strategic pillars that will guide our work in the years ahead:

- **Expanding access and impact** so more individuals can benefit from our comprehensive, evidence-informed programs.
- **Elevating visibility** by sharing our expertise and leadership in whole-person supportive care.
- **Strengthening capacity** to ensure a strong internal foundation that sustains our mission for decades.
- **Driving sustainable growth** to keep all programs and services free of charge for anyone who needs them.

Another significant highlight of 2025 was the launch of our **Newly Diagnosed Consultations**, offering personalized guidance and support to the growing number of participants coming to us early in their diagnosis—often an uncertain and overwhelming time. This service demonstrates our commitment to meeting people where they are and supporting them as they determine their needs.

As you read this report, we hope you feel proud of the impact you make possible. Your generosity is shaping a future where every person facing cancer can access compassionate, whole-person care—and redefining what it means to live with and beyond cancer.

Thank you for being an essential part of our mission and our community.

With gratitude,



*Carrie Callas*

Carrie Callas  
Executive Director



*Steve Schwartz*

Steve Schwartz  
Board Chair



## ABOUT CANCER WELLNESS CENTER

Cancer Wellness Center provides a trusted, expert-led environment where cancer patients and their loved ones can access evidence-based programs, professional support, and resources designed to improve quality of life throughout the cancer experience.

**All of our services are offered free of charge  
thanks to the generosity of our donors.**

### Our Vision

We envision cancer care in which psychosocial support is as vital and accessible as medical treatment.

### Our Mission

Cancer Wellness Center helps individuals and their loved ones navigate a cancer diagnosis through whole-person care, expert guidance, and a welcoming community.

### Our Values

- **Compassion**
- **Excellence**
- **Integrity**
- **Inclusiveness**
- **Collaboration**

# Shaping the Future of Whole-Person Cancer Care

During 2025, we developed a new strategic plan, grounded in the voices of our community, to guide our work for the next three years. Through a broad stakeholder input process, we refreshed our vision and mission and set a clear path to strengthen and sustain cancer supportive care for years to come.

Each strategic pillar in the plan works together to expand access, impact, and elevate our role and visibility as a leader in whole-person cancer care.

As one participant in our planning process shared, *"I can't imagine hearing the words, 'you have cancer' and 'you have to pay for services'. I would be lost without this place."*

## 4 Strategic Pillars



Expand Access and  
Maximize Impact



Elevate Visibility



Strengthen Internal  
Capacity



Drive Sustainable Growth



## OUR SERVICES

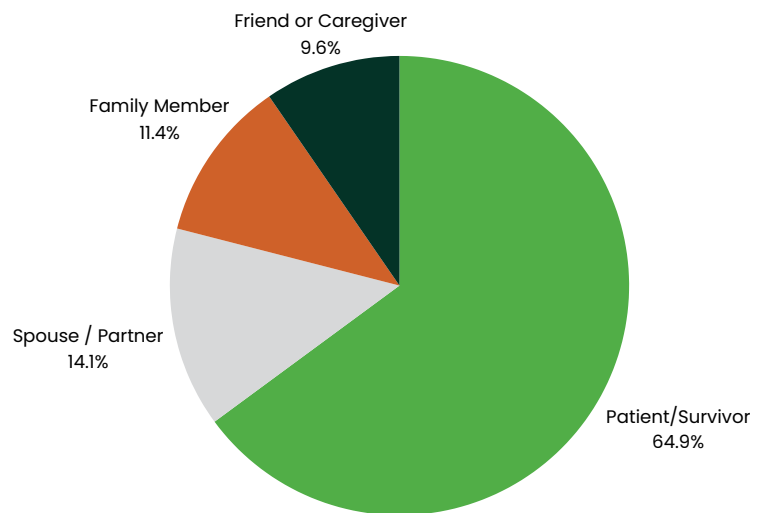
Whether you're living with cancer or are a caregiver or loved one, Cancer Wellness Center offers vital supportive care after diagnosis, throughout treatment, and beyond.

- Professional Counseling
- Support Groups
- Fitness & Wellness
- Workshops & Lectures
- Nutrition
- Social Programs
- Programs for Children & Families

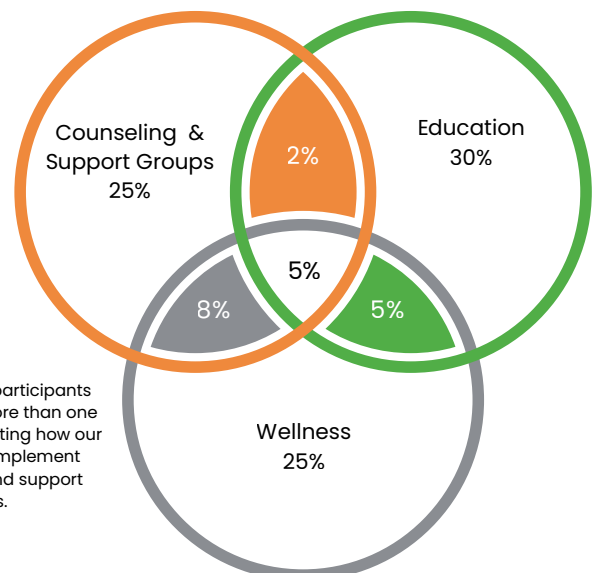
## Expanding our reach

In 2025, our programs served **2,423 participants** from **195 Illinois zip codes** and **254 zip codes** in total across the country.

### PARTICIPANT IDENTITY



### PARTICIPANTS BY SERVICE AREA



Some of our participants engage in more than one service, reflecting how our programs complement each other and support varying needs.



## PARTICIPANT IMPACT

96%

Improved ability to manage distress

94%

Improved emotional well-being

97%

Improved understanding of cancer experience

93%

Increased sense of community

96%

Improved communication with support system


85%

Decreased physical symptoms of stress



## New Offering: Newly Diagnosed Consultations

In response to a growing need, we introduced Newly Diagnosed Consultations to better support individuals at the earliest stages of their cancer experience to help process a diagnosis, identify available support, navigate the medical system, and address early emotional and logistical needs. Guided by a trained clinician, participants explore coping strategies, clarify next steps, and connect with resources tailored to their unique circumstances.

 IN-PERSON

 ESPAÑOL

 VIRTUAL



# Zentangle with Mary

This March, Mary Hamming will celebrate 4 years of hosting the beloved Zentangle program at Cancer Wellness Center. A beautiful and faithful community of students has been built from a simple, meditative art practice.

Zentangle involves drawing structured patterns and requires only ink and paper. According to Mary, it's all about following directions to allow your brain to relax and enter a flow state.

**"One of the rules of Zentangle,"** Mary says, **"is that there are no mistakes. We just turn it into an opportunity for something else. It's a lesson in letting go and not judging yourself."**

Mary is a retired registered nurse and social worker. Throughout her career, she often referred patients and families to the Center.

Through community and connection, Mary recognized an opportunity to share a meditative art practice that had been deeply healing in her own cancer experience. Since launching the class, she has witnessed meaningful transformation among participants. What began as a relaxed, creative outlet has grown into a supportive community of its own through the Zentangle practice.

**"There is a lot of informal support that goes on before and after class. Students are eager to help each other. They compare experiences and side effects of specific chemo treatments, ask about doctors and insurance coverage and where to get a wig, etc. Zentangle has a lot of regular students so they get to know each other and share their cancer journeys."**

For many students, this is a chance to turn their brains off, to release control and let artistic expression lead the way. Students may not believe they can complete what seems like a complex pattern, but Mary tells them, **"we will get there, step by step."** This has been symbolic of what students feel in their cancer experience. There is a lack of control, but with social programs like these, there is a community behind them to help them, step by step. What keeps Mary coming back is the students. She receives as much from them as they get from her.

# IN THE WORDS OF OUR PARTICIPANTS



"I have learned things about cancer, nutrition, mindfulness, treatments, among other things. I have made friends with others who have been through the cancer experience, whether it be personally or through their family members.

It is so reassuring to know that I am not alone in my struggles, and it is a meaningful way to provide support to others."

"The counseling I received has helped me understand and process my grief of my husband's passing from cancer while also trying to cope with my own cancer.

It has been extremely difficult, and I am grateful and so appreciative of my therapist's guidance and support."



"At first, I was only looking for exercise classes, but when I found out about the amazing and extensive offerings at the Center, I signed up! I have utilized the Yoga classes, Feldenkrais workshop, individual therapy, Zentangle, as well as a number of art workshops."



# Luis' Story

Before his cancer diagnosis, Luis would describe his life as “being asleep.” He spent his time with his wife and two kids, looking forward to retirement and not expecting any major changes.

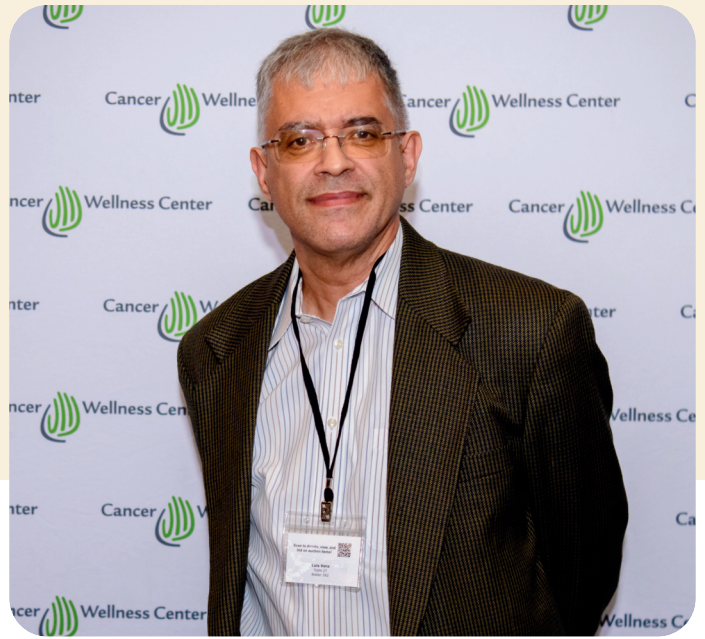
Then cancer became his “alarm clock” creating an unexpected rush of fear, anger, and loneliness that was difficult to process.

**“There is before and after,” says Luis reflecting on the day he was diagnosed. “It’s hard to describe how you are a completely different person. That is the day that things change.”**

Fortunately, Luis found Cancer Wellness Center. He first reached out for counseling services and later found a deeper sense of connection in the Men’s Discussion Group.

Like many men, opening up did not come easily for Luis because society often does not encourage or support men to be vulnerable when expressing their emotions.

But for him, Cancer Wellness Center became what he would describe as a safe haven, with the Men’s Group holding a meaningful space in his cancer experience.



**“The value of the Men’s Group is not just while you are in the trenches, it’s when you get demobilized.”**

Specialty discussion groups and expert clinical staff who truly “get it” make all the difference in navigating a cancer experience. Groups at the Center focus on helping a person find his or her peers – like Luis’ – and offer the opportunity to connect with others who can relate to that experience. Knowing that this opportunity exists and is free, releases the financial pressures and mental barriers a person might experience when seeking help.

For anyone new or returning to the Center, Luis wants them to know there is something for them here. Whether you are the one diagnosed, the family member, the loved one, the child, or the parent, the Center is a resource and an advocate for that personal experience.

*“Having a space where everyone knew what I was talking about and there was no judgement was crucial.”*



# Jeanne's Story

In May 2022, Jeanne heard words no one wants to hear. Doctors told her, “You have Stage IV pancreatic cancer. It’s terminal, I can’t cure you. All we can do is help you to live as well as you can for as long as you can.” Jeanne knew that her cancer carried a short prognosis. She realized that managing her disease was going to tax her in every way—physically, emotionally, psychologically, socially, and spiritually.

Jeanne’s medical treatment was excellent, but she needed additional support. Her nurses and a hospital social worker encouraged her to contact Cancer Wellness Center. She was assured the Center was a welcoming, vibrant place which hosted a wide array of programs, services, and events for cancer patients and their families, all free of charge. It was at the Center Jeanne was told where she could find help in ways beyond what her medical team could do.

Jeanne soon felt at home, connecting with caring and knowledgeable professionals about the realities cancer patients face. She met other participants with similar experiences and learned how comforting it was to talk to people who understood.

Jeanne’s community of support has grown: she has received guidance from a caring, professional counselor and she consulted with the Center’s oncology dietitian; she zooms with patients with her type of cancer; she listens to exciting presentations on new therapies; she found a wig; and she and her family and friends often participate in the Stepping Up to Wellness Run/Walk fundraiser.

Seeing the impact the Center has on so many lives inspired Jeanne and her family to become annual donors. That’s why she considers the Center’s free programs and services an invaluable resource—one she wants everyone to access—because it provides support for emotional, physical, and social well-being.

It has now been almost four years since Jeanne’s diagnosis. She’s undergone a multitude of chemotherapy treatments, radiation, and surgery to remove her primary tumor. She strongly believes that the incredible support she has received from family, friends and Cancer Wellness Center have contributed greatly to her longevity. Since her diagnosis, Jeanne has felt the joy of seeing her son get married and three grandchildren being born.

*“Cancer Wellness Center’s virtual classes provided a lifeline for someone like me who couldn’t always get to the Center.”*

# INCREASING ACCESS



## Men's Health

**In 2025, male participation grew by 26%**, reflecting both a rising need and the impact of tailored offerings such as our regular Men's Hike, dedicated support groups, and annual fly-fishing retreat. This increase highlights the value of creating spaces where men feel supported and encouraged to engage in wellness-focused programming.



## Spanish-Speaking

**The Center welcomed a new Community Health Worker dedicated to coordinating wellness and educational programs for the Latino community.** Building on our existing counseling, wellness, and education services, this role strengthens culturally responsive outreach and improves access to care for Spanish-speaking individuals and families.



## Children & Families

**Child and family programming participation rose by 30% from 2024 to 2025.** Activities such as teen meet-ups, game nights, therapy dog visits, holiday celebrations, and the summer block party offer meaningful opportunities for connection. The Center also co-chaired the AYAs Take Chicago event, supporting adolescents and young adults in building strong, supportive peer networks.



## Nutrition

**Participation in nutrition services increased by 11%** as the Center expanded monthly education and support programs. These sessions helped patients and loved ones build healthier habits, process nutrition-related emotions, and make informed dietary choices, giving them practical tools and greater confidence in navigating their cancer experience.



## CELEBRATING YOUR SUPPORT

Better Together  
Benefit

Stepping Up To  
Wellness  
Run/Walk

Golf Outing

Day of Fun

In the fall, our community came together at the Benefit to honor **Dr. Sigrun Hallmeyer with the CWC Impact Award**. The event highlighted not only her dedication to improving the lives of those affected by cancer, but also celebrated the deep generosity and support of our community, whose commitment strengthens the Center's mission year after year.

Last spring, **nearly 1,000 survivors and supporters came together for our annual Stepping Up To Wellness Run/Walk**. Each year, this cherished event brings families and friends together to make every step count, celebrating community, connection, and fun while making a meaningful financial impact.

For over 20 years, golfers, donors, and corporate partners have supported the Center through our annual Golf Outing. Last July at Conway Farms Golf Club, **we enjoyed a wonderful day on the green celebrating community and raising critical funds for our programs**.

**Nearly 200 people joined our annual Day of Fun, spending the day playing Canasta, Mah Jong, and Bridge**. The camaraderie and special remarks emphasized the importance of supporting the Center, making it a meaningful day of community and purpose.

# Honoring Decades of Leadership

For more than two decades, **Steve Lewis and Justin Sheperd** shaped the Cancer Wellness Center through exceptional leadership, generosity, and service.

In 2000, Steve Lewis made a deliberate decision: he wanted to give back to the community that had supported him throughout his life and career. He set out to find a mission driven, local organization where he could see the impact of his giving firsthand— he found that at Cancer Wellness Center.

**“I wanted a local charity,” Steve reflects, “because I wanted to see that the dollars I invested were benefiting our community.”**

What began as corporate sponsorship—which included an annual donation, a special dedication each April, and raising awareness at local Northbrook meetings—quickly evolved into deeper engagement and leadership. Steve joined the Board of Directors and ultimately served in key leadership roles, including Board Chair. His steady leadership helped guide the Center’s long-term direction.

During a transformative period for the organization, Steve and fellow Board leaders reaffirmed the Center’s commitment that every program and service would remain free of charge.

*“I could confidently refer someone to the Center and know that a professional will get in touch with them. No amount of money can put a price tag on that experience.”*

But Steve’s vision extended beyond finances: he understood the importance of how a person feels the moment they walk through the Center’s doors.

He championed essential improvements—roof repairs, HVAC upgrades, recarpeting, kitchen and bathroom renovations, and ongoing building preservation—to ensure the Center remained a warm, safe, and comforting place for patients and their families. His efforts helped preserve the environment that makes the Center feel like a welcoming and safe space.

Steve dreams of a future where the Cancer Wellness Center is no longer needed. While he knows a cure may not come in his lifetime, he is determined that the Center continues to grow, evolve, and serve the community with increasing impact.



# Our New Lifetime Directors

*As they transition off the Board, we honor their impact by sharing their stories and recognizing both with the **distinction of Lifetime Director.***

In 2001, Justin and Robin Sheperd came to Cancer Wellness Center seeking guidance and support after Robin's cancer diagnosis. They were greeted by founder Patsy Winicour herself—a moment that began a deep and lasting relationship with the Center.

Over time, their role shifted from receiving support to giving it. Robin became an active and dedicated volunteer, and together she and Justin co-chaired the annual Better Together Benefit. Justin's connection to the Center continued to grow as well, and in 2011 he joined the Board of Directors, where he served in several leadership roles, including Board Chair.

Justin also showed up for the mission in another way: year after year, he was a top finisher, including first place in the Center's annual Stepping Up to Wellness Run/Walk, raising awareness and demonstrating his commitment and support.



To Justin, the impact of the Center is undeniable, and something donors can see firsthand.

**“Joining the Board has been a rewarding experience,” Justin shares. “Board members provide leadership and professional guidance while helping ensure that anyone who needs the Center knows about it.”**

For Justin, that sense of connection is life-changing for anyone touched by a cancer diagnosis. Over the years, he has watched the Center evolve and expand to meet the changing needs of the community.

**“When you get the diagnosis, you’ve suddenly gone from being part of one community to being part of another,” he says. “Finding a community of people, practitioners, and specialists who understand that and can provide help and support is incredibly important.”**

Like Steve, Justin also wishes fewer people needed the Center. His hope is that for those who do, every person knows it exists and has access to the life-changing programs and services offered.

*“The dedication of the professionals, the rigor of their training, and the comprehensive counseling services and programs they provide—offered entirely free of charge—play a vital role in improving people’s quality of life.”*

# FUNDING OUR MISSION

Fiscal Year: January 1 through December 31

In 2025, thanks to the generosity of our donors and partners, the Center expanded its reach and participants served, invested in capacity-building initiatives, and enhanced the delivery of evidence-based supportive care.

Because of this community's commitment, every individual seeking support at the Center can access life-changing services without financial barriers.

	2024	2025		2024	2025
<b>OPERATING REVENUE</b>			<b>ASSETS</b>		
Contributions and Bequests	667,827	1,085,587	Cash and Cash Equivalents	362,340	400,427
Special Events (net)	897,417	688,764	Current Receivables	73,468	66,328
Grants	595,032	654,750	Prepaid Expenses	69,617	74,210
Other Revenue	21,035	20,030	Inventory/Other	-	21,516
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>2,181,310</b>	<b>2,449,132</b>	<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>505,426</b>	<b>562,481</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>			Investments	3,386,127	3,864,270
Program Services	1,624,944	1,660,481	Property and Equipment (net)	698,370	691,254
Development	596,183	594,541	<b>Total Other Assets</b>	<b>4,084,497</b>	<b>4,555,524</b>
Management and General	244,506	192,402	<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>4,589,922</b>	<b>5,118,004</b>
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>2,465,633</b>	<b>2,447,424</b>	<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<i>Difference</i>	(284,323)	1,708	Accounts Payable	24,337	6,717
			Accrued Expenses	169,482	162,987
			Other Liabilities	21,000	7,500
			<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>214,819</b>	<b>177,204</b>
			<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
			Net Assets with Donor Restriction	1,656,616	1,974,564
			Board Designated Net Assets	1,822,910	2,053,856
			Non-Restricted	895,577	912,380
			<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>4,375,103</b>	<b>4,940,800</b>
			<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>4,589,922</b>	<b>5,118,004</b>

The Center also received in-kind support for program that is not included above.

Rated 4 Stars by Charity Navigator and the Candid Gold Seal



Charity Navigator's 4-Star rating is its highest, given to nonprofits that exceed or meet best practices and industry standards. Candid's Gold Seal recognizes strong transparency through publicly shared financial and organizational information.

Together, these ratings show donors they can feel confident investing in the Center.



# OUR TEAM

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

**Carrie Callas, AM**  
Executive Director

**Michelle Maer**  
Director of Development

**Priscilla Andrews, MA, LCPC**  
Clinical Director

**Savina Chacheva**  
Program Director

**Susie Rosenbaum**  
Chief Financial Officer

## PROGRAM, DEVELOPMENT & ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

**Arlette Alegria**  
Community Health Worker

**Doris Sanchez Downing**  
Data and Analytics Manager

**Gail Fradin**  
Development Manager

**MaryAnn Ng**  
Accountant and Gift Management Specialist

**Dymond Redd**  
Marketing Associate

**Lisa Roudabush**  
Program Associate

**Miraj Shariff**  
Client Services Associate

**Lauren Tenenbaum**  
Client Services Associate

**Jeff Thomas**  
Community Engagement Coordinator

## CLINICAL TEAM

**Stephanie Aaron, AM, LCSW**  
Clinical Manager, Senior Licensed Clinical Social Worker

**Nora Barquin, LCSW**  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Spanish-language Services & Intake

**Heidi Brockstein, LCSW**  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker

**Lori Bumbaco, MS, RDN, CSO, LDN**  
Licensed Oncology Dietitian Nutritionist

**Michele Hernandez, LCSW**  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker

**Dominique James, MS, LCPC,**  
Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, Program Development & Administration

**Alana Lebovitz, MSW**  
Intake Coordinator

**Mark Livshots, MA, LCPC**  
Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, Program Development & Administration

**Kimberly Matthews, MA, LCPC**  
Senior Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, Group Services Lead

**Megan McMahon, PhD**  
Senior Licensed Clinical Psychologist, Training & Research Lead

**Elyssa Siegel, CCLS**  
Certified Child Life Specialist, Family & Child Program Development

**Gabrielle Wolk, PsyD**  
Senior Licensed Clinical Psychologist

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Steve Schwartz**  
Chair

**Tracy Kazan**  
Vice Chair

**Arlene Levin**  
Treasurer

**Ryan Carey**  
Secretary

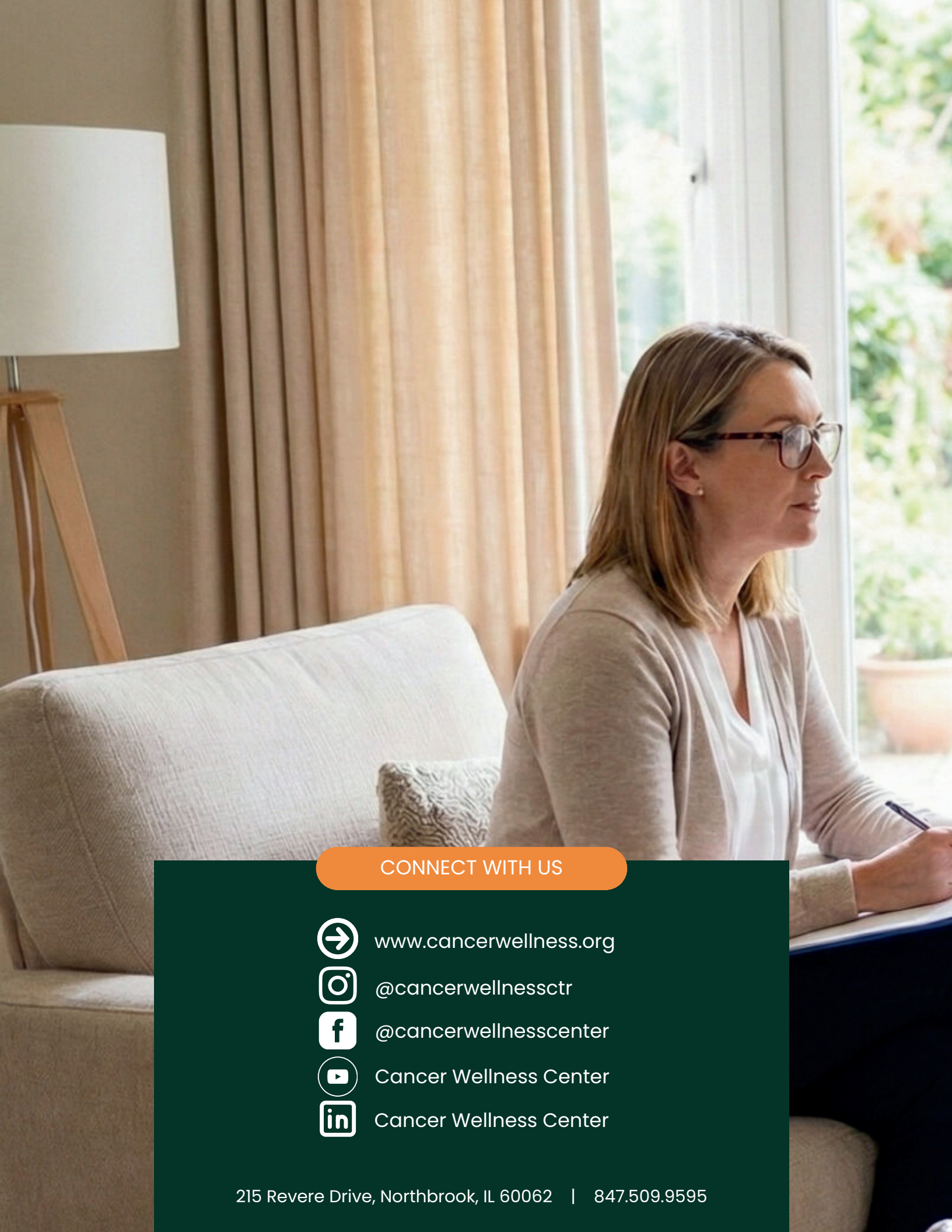
**Susan Barr**  
**Jonathan Blume**  
**Shelley Clark**  
**Lynn Chestler**  
**Dan Fisher**  
**Matt Gable**  
**Brett Kroner**  
**Anna Lasko**  
**Allyson Marks Greenfield**  
**Ellen Razzoog**  
**Rhonda Salins**  
**Scott Winicour**

## LIFETIME DIRECTORS

**David Cella, Ph.D.**  
**Mimi Horwitz**  
**Steven H. Lewis**  
**Marc Samotny**  
**Justin Sheperd**

## CO-FOUNDERS

**Judy Brannon, RN, BSN**  
**Patsy Winicour**



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